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THE ULTIMATES™ 2

ISSUE

2

DEAD MAN WALKING

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When faced with Nazi Germany's military advances, the U.S. government decided that the best weapon against them was a person, not a bomb. With this in mind, Steve Rogers volunteered for a covert military experiment that turned him into Captain America. After a few years of exemplary service, Captain America fell in battle-- his body wasn't recovered.

Years passed and Captain America was found frozen in suspended animation. When he awoke, he was convinced to join Iron Man, The Wasp, Giant Man, Black Widow, Hawkeye, and Thor in forming the superhuman defense initiative run by Nick Fury, called The Ultimates.

PREVIOUSLY IN THE ULTIMATES:

The Ultimates have had two decisive battles since Nick Fury brought them together. The first was when they saved New York City from the rampaging monster known as The Hulk. What the world at large doesn't know is that The Hulk is really Bruce Banner, a scientist who was working on the superhuman defense initiative.

The second battle The Ultimates won was against an army of shape-shifting aliens bent on destroying the world and killing all humankind. These two victories made The Ultimates the biggest celebrities the world has ever known.

It has just been leaked that Bruce Banner is the Hulk.

DEAD MAN WALKING



S T A N L E E P R E S E N T S :

THE ULTIMATES

MARK MILLAR STORY BRYAN HITCH PERCIS PAUL NEARY INKS

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God. You get some
ugly fish, don't you?
There's one over
here looks exactly like
Ernest Borgnine.



Tony, would you please stop talking about Ernest Borgnine and just hurry the hell up? We're supposed to be going to Donatella's after-show party in half an hour.

I'm sorry, Miss Romanov, but I'm afraid you're either gonna have to call up and **cancel** or go to this thing by **yourself**.

Tony, how's the new **suit** holding up? Body temp and air supply are looking good. The **pressure** giving you any grief down there?



No, the pressure's **perfect**. Happy. **Everything's perfect**. This suit feels a **thousand** times better than the old one.

The optics are working beautifully, but I've released some flashbulbs in case they need a little more light down there around the **submarine**.



Pad, it's Brian.

I think **Iron Man** just showed up.



Mister Stark? This is Professor James Braddock from the European Super-Soldier Initiative. On behalf of my colleagues and I, I'd just like to thank you for helping out on such short notice.

I'm only sorry I can't introduce you to these soldiers we've been enhancing, but until you sign the appropriate non-disclosure forms...

Take it easy, Professor. I've got twenty-three offices in the European Union, so the concept of red tape isn't exactly alien to me.



Guy, I'm going to try moving this thing backwards off the rocks if you can get under there and support me. Happy, I need five times more power if you can set up a two-minute download.

Satellite primed, Tony. Power boost should be hitting your battery in T-minus fifteen...



Hold on, boys. Grab hold of something steady.



My God--

Would you look at that?



What did we
create here,
Tony?

A ten-billion-dollar means of
rendering my weekends *miserable*,
Mister Hogan. Now could somebody
in this dump please fetch me a
drink? Jarvis, what the hell
are we *paying* you for?

Because I've still
got the *negatives*, Miss Romanov.
And you can fetch your *own* bloody
drink. I've got my *hands* full at the
moment playing *strip-monopoly*.

Besides, you're supposed
to be some kind of
super hero. Shouldn't
you be *helping* him or
something?



I'm a former Soviet *super-
spy*. Idiot. What am I going to do with a
stricken submarine? Take pictures?

What Master Tony sees in
you I'll *never* know, you
slutty mix.

Well, I'm afraid you'll just
have to get used to me, old
man, because I'm not going
anywhere as long as I'm
giving him that one thing
that even you can't
deliver.



what's
that, darling?
Hungarian
goulash?



Oh,
hell.

What's
wrong?

Just got a message
from General
Fury.



This
is really
bad.



She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes.



Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies,
One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which--

--damn.



What's wrong,
Pietro?

Another message from
one of the *primates*,
darling. What's the
matter with these
Americans? Don't they
even appreciate the
concept of
downtime?



Quicksilver speaking and
this had *better* be important.
This call has already shattered
the most perfect moment my
sister and I have enjoyed in
quite some time.

Phoning in the middle of lunch? What kind of people are we associating with these days?

Mm-hm.

Mm-hm.

Mm-hm.

Mm-hm.

What is it *this* time? Another alien invasion?

No, they said this Bruce Banner character's just been outed as The Hulk. Apparently, there's some kind of crisis meeting at the Triakelion and they want to know if we can *join* them.

But I wanted ice cream after this... and a walk through the monastery of St. Lazarus where Byron wrote "Don Juan."

Likewise, darling, but I also feel it might be unwise to alienate these people like we alienated ourselves from our old friends in the *mutant* community.

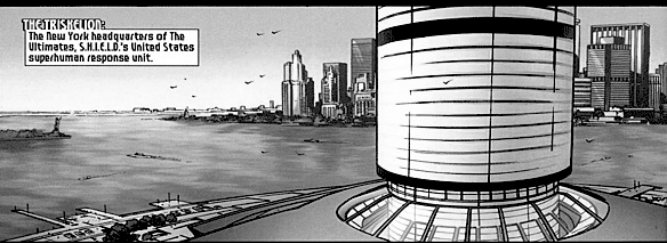
Don't you think we should maybe suffer their tedium just this once and explore Venice together at some *later date*? It looks like it was going to rain here, anyway.

Oh, all right, Pietro.
But just for you.



INTRODUCTION

The New York headquarters of The Ultimates, S.H.I.E.L.D.'s United States superhuman response unit.



Conference Room 8A

Okay, we've all heard the rumors, Nick. What's happening with this Hulk situation? Is it true you've lost your job?

Not yet, but I'll know for sure by the end of the day, Jan.



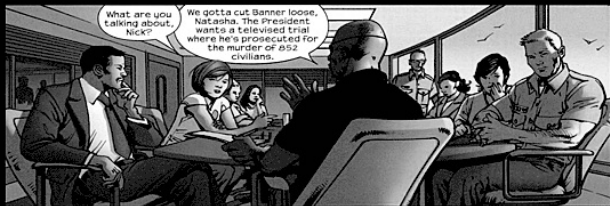
It's one thing lying to the American public, but the President don't take it too well when all the files we were hiding from the Oval Office get broadcast on every major television network.



I can't believe S.H.I.E.L.D. made such a hash of this. I thought national security was your particular field of interest.







What are you talking about, Nick?

We gotta cut Banner loose, Natasha. The President wants a televised trial where he's prosecuted for the murder of 852 civilians.



But that's an automatic death sentence.



Almost certainly, but that's what the public wants, Tony.



Betty, for God's sake, this is Bruce we're talking about.



And you think I'm *unaware* of that? You think this isn't hitting me harder than anyone else in this room?

Bruce and I have been on and off for the last five years, but my first duty is to my job and the security of this country, Jan.



I'm feeling this more than *anyone*, but if I can be *professional* and get behind this P.R. job, the rest of you can do it *too*.

Sorry. You're absolutely right. I'm sorry.



Where is Banner anyway? Does he even know this is happening?

He knows what he saw on TV and he's downstairs crying in his cell. We got him doped up to the eyeballs for his own protection, but the irony is he hasn't turned into the Hulk in *weeks*.



TIMES SQUARE



HADES





Excuse
me?



WHERE THE HELL
DO YOU GET OFF
LEAKING CLASSIFIED
INFORMATION LIKE
THIS?

What?



Don't try to
weasel your way
out of *this* one,
you sick freak! The
whole team knows
you released
those files!

You just
made us look
like liars to the
whole damn world
and probably got
Banner the chair,
buster!



Johan, do me a
favor and tell the
guys to switch off
the music for a
second, huh?



Yo, Thor.
What's up,
man?



Nothing I can't handle. Captain America
here just accused me of leaking those Bruce
Banner papers to the press and I think he's
come to beat me up. Is that an *accurate*
assessment, Captain?

A black and white comic panel showing Iron Man in the foreground, looking serious. In the background, a crowd of people is visible, some holding up cameras or phones. A speech bubble from a woman in the crowd is present.

This supposed to be
intimidating, jackass?
Two hundred fellas with
long hair that haven't
seen a bath in
months?

A black and white comic panel showing Iron Man from the chest up, looking back over his shoulder at the crowd. A speech bubble is present.

Word of advice,
Captain America--I'm not Hank
Pym. There are some people out
there bigger than *Giant Man*, you
know. We don't all crumble at the
sight of some clown in a flag.

A large black and white comic panel featuring a close-up of Iron Man's face. He has a serious, slightly weary expression. A speech bubble is present.

And as far as your accusations go, I've
been in the Triskelion three times in my life:
Once to see *Fury*, once to have breakfast
with *Tony* and once for that *charity*
thing we did last Christmas.

A large black and white comic panel featuring a close-up of Iron Man's face, continuing from the previous panel. A speech bubble is present.

I can barely
do my *e-mail*,
never mind hack
into classified
S.H.I.E.L.D.
files...

A black and white comic panel showing Iron Man in the foreground, looking towards the crowd. A speech bubble from a woman in the crowd is present.

Besides, I'm the most vocal
opponent of the death penalty
in this country. Do you really
think I'd just hand over Banner
to your cowboy president
for a public lynching?

A black and white comic panel showing Iron Man in the foreground, looking towards the crowd. A speech bubble is present.

Just watch your step, *Goldilocks*.
You've had access to a lot of privileged
information these last eighteen
months and if you do anything
to compromise this country's
security...

A black and white comic panel showing Iron Man on the left, looking towards a woman on the right. The woman has a surprised expression. A speech bubble is present.

Hey,
soldier?
Hm?

A black and white comic panel showing Iron Man on the right, looking towards a woman on the left. A speech bubble with the word 'Puh!' is present.

Puh!





Idiot! You came to me because you wanted a better way. *Now* what are you acting like? A bunch of frat boys.

Are you okay, Rogers?

Fine, but some of your friends here could use a little lesson in manners...



Listen, I'm sorry about this. I really didn't want that to happen and I'm serious when I said I'd nothing to do with outing Banner.

That said, I think I know who *might* have released those files.

Who?



My evil half-brother, *Loki*. A messenger from Asgard came to warn me that he *escaped* from his bonds again and journeyed to Midgard to do everything he could to--

Thor, please.



What?

Just shut up.



You go to church every Sunday, Captain.

What I've got to say's no stranger than *that*.

How are you feeling, Bruce?

Kind of relieved, to be honest.

I've been living in *limbo* for the last eighteen months. Locked up like a rat in a cage, no contact with the outside world. Did you hear I'm not even allowed to watch TV anymore?

And why's that?

In case I catch something on the news that upsets my **adrenal system** and triggers off another *Hulk* episode. It's ridiculous. I haven't turned into the Hulk in *months*.

Well, you're not missing much: afternoon talk shows and late-night political slots where people debate the merits of killing you by **electric chair** and killing you by **lethal injection**.

You do realize you're going to be **executed** for this, don't you? Politically, there's really no alternative when the fatalities are in triple-figures like this.

I've known since the minute they locked me up, Professor. It was always pretty **obvious** I wasn't getting out of there alive...



...but, like I said, there's something kinda *liberating* about not being in that *no-man's-land* anymore.

A sign in the background reads "NOT SALE HERE". Tony Stark is in the foreground, looking thoughtful. Bruce Banner stands behind him, gesturing towards the ocean.

Where *is* this place? Where *are* we? I can taste salt water on the air, but there's also the smell of someone barbecuing steaks on a charcoal grill. Are we standing in a *confused* memory here?



Yeah, it seems to be a kinda cross between the time my mom and dad took me up to Kennebunkport and the time I spent the summer at my cousin's place down in Runnemede, New Jersey.

The scene shows a group of people at a beach barbecue. Tony Stark is in the foreground, looking at Bruce Banner. Bruce is talking to a woman with sunglasses. In the background, other people are grilling food.

I used to love going down there and staying with Jenny. The fact she was five years *younger* than me meant she didn't realize what an *idiot* I was yet.



I've just been told our time is up, Bruce. Do you want to stay here until I come back tomorrow? *General Fury* doesn't seem to have any objections.

A close-up of Tony Stark and Bruce Banner. Tony is on the left, looking towards Bruce on the right. Bruce is looking down, appearing somber.

Nah, as nice as it is in my pre-frontal gyrus I guess I should get out there and face the music, huh? Hank Pym's supposed to be dropping by to see me at 4:00 anyway.



Whatever makes this easier, young man. I'll be back tomorrow, of course. Same time, same place. You know my psychic distress code if that monster gives you any trouble in the meantime.

On the left, Tony Stark sits in a wheelchair, looking towards Bruce. On the right, Bruce Banner sits at a desk with a laptop, looking at Tony.

Absolutely, Professor Xavier.

"Absolutely."



So
how *was*
he?

Surprisingly
relaxed. He's a very
clever man who's spent
a lot of time in there
with little else to do
besides contemplate
his fate.

He knows full
well how this is all
going to end and
seems to be taking
it all rather better
than expected.

It just hasn't sunk in
yet. Wait'll the trial
starts. *Then* we'll see
how well he's taking it,
poor little guy.

Have you given any more thought to
this idea that I might enlist him in my
school? I've become something of a
past master when it comes to
helping people with dangerous
powers.

Scott here
couldn't open his
eyes without killing
anyone in his line of
vision when we first
met. Isn't that right,
Scott? And we
fixed him up soon
enough.

All well and good,
Mister Summers, except
this isn't *about* finding a
peaceful solution to the
problem anymore. This is
about giving the public a
villain they can blame for
the *Manhattan*
situation.

"Nihil fieri non
potest nobiscum",
General Fury.
"Nothing is beyond
our reach." That's
our school motto,
in case you
hadn't heard.

They want a
scapegoat,
Scott. A peculiar
human trait where
some *satisfaction*
can be taken from
the suffering of
others.

I'm pleased
to say you wouldn't
understand.



Which reminds me, I told Fury I really wanted you to get all these new **super-soldier** designs I'd been putting together.

Don't worry about giving me a credit or anything when they publish the papers. No use to me where I'm going, right?

Don't talk like that. You don't know for sure how this is all going to pan out and, besides, didn't you hear? I'm gone at the end of the month anyway.

Why? I thought you **loved** this place.

I do, but they don't exactly love me back. They're saying it's because they can't risk any more unstable personalities, but there's definitely **something else** going on here.

What do you mean?

I think we all got used to making this terrifying **military force** they put together seem **nice and friendly** for a while.

Y'know, **playboy** billionaires and eccentric geniuses to pave the way for all the big, crazy **soldiers** they're going to have in these costumes by the end of the year?

No way. They wouldn't be building everybody up like this if they were just going to replace them with regular Army grunts...

Look who they're **bringing in**, man; Hawkeye, Widow, all those weirdos and psychopaths from the Black Ops units like **Scarlet Witch** and **Quicksilver**.

Look who they're **phasing out**.

Look who they're **phasing out**.



TO BE CONTINUED...

CUPO' JOE



**HEY,
GANG,**

Can you think of a better way to start off 2005, than a pair of spinning sais on the silver screen? Yes, that was alliteration, and yes, I'm talking Fox's Elektra flick, opening January 14th!

You've seen the pics online, you've seen the trailers, you've seen the one-sheets... this is Elektra! Shrouded in mystery. Tainted by tragedy. Trained to kill. And left for dead...but for Elektra Natchios, death was just the beginning. Now, she's back — with a vengeance.

Having severed all ties with the world and only living for her next assignment, an unexpected turn of events forces Elektra in a whole new direction — a direction that could destroy her. The catalyst for this change is a father and his teenage daughter, on the run for their lives...from The Hand!

Love it. You guys know the source material inside-out, and man are they doing a bang-up job respecting it. In this flick you're gonna get Kirigi. Typhoid Mary. Ninjas galore. The capper? Oscar®-nominee Terence Stamp as Stick!

...and oh yeah, a certain white-hot star of Alias — in red, as she should be. Ridiculously hot.

Can't wait for this. You guys know my history with Daredevil, and my equal affinity for Elektra...an amazing character right out of the gate. The time has come for her story to be fully realized in live action...not just for fanboys, but for everybody!

The film opens nationwide January 14, 2005...

THANK YOU FOX!

See ya in the funnybooks (...and on the big screen, and on DVD, and...)

See ya in
the funnybooks,
JQ
EEK!

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Blood
Violence
Strong Language



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